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Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the sixty-third session

Observer status for the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation in the General Assembly

Letter dated 17 July from the Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, pursuant to rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the sixty-third session of the Assembly of an item entitled "Observer status for the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation in the General Assembly".

This request is made by the Republic of Paraguay with the support of the following States: Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Mongolia, Nepal and Senegal.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) in support of the above request and a draft resolution (annex II) are attached to the present letter.

I also have the honour to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Eladio **Loizaga**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. Historical background

1. The Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation (AITIC) was established in 2004 as an intergovernmental organization to assist resource-constrained countries to have a more active participation in international trade.

2. Purpose

2. Through the provision of trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building AITIC helps its members to promote trade-led growth. The Agency provides free, personalized assistance, tailored especially to the particular needs for information and analysis concerning trade and development issues. A priority area for AITIC assistance is Africa, although activities also cover the Caribbean, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific.

3. Membership

3. As at 31 March 2008, AITIC has 61 members of which seven are sponsoring and 54 are participating members. AITIC is funded by Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

4. Organizational structure

4. AITIC functions through the Council of Representatives, the Executive Board and a Secretariat headed by an Executive Director:

(a) The Council of Representatives, consisting of representatives of the sponsoring and the participating members, is the decision-making organ;

(b) The Executive Board consists of three members each from the sponsoring and participating members and, ex officio, the Executive Director;

(c) The Secretariat:

(i) Manages the day-to-day operations of AITIC as staff management in accordance with the staff regulations;

(ii) Submits proposals for the annual work programme, budget and report on AITIC activities for consideration by the Board and approval by the Council;

(iii) Submits to the Board and the Council an independently audited statement of receipts and expenditures related to the budget during the preceding fiscal period;

(iv) Represents AITIC externally;

(d) The annual accounts and financial statements are audited by an External Auditor.

5. Finance

5. The regular annual budget of AITIC is funded by the sponsoring members. Other voluntary contributions in cash or in kind are encouraged from sponsoring and participating members, Governments, and other intergovernmental agencies or private sponsors, in accordance with the provisions of the Agency's financial regulations.

6. Activities

6. The Agency's assistance to its participating members and other resource-constrained countries with priority to the least developed countries includes: organization of seminars, training sessions, workshops and meetings (in some cases, in collaboration with other institutions); preparation of background notes, information briefs and ad hoc documents prepared on demand on topics relating to international trade and development. The Agency provides assistance in the three official languages of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (English, French and Spanish).

7. AITIC extends support to those countries that cannot afford to establish and maintain a permanent representation at Geneva. Assisting officials from these "non-resident" countries is one of the Agency's main functions; to this effect, AITIC created the Non-Residents' Unit in October 2000. AITIC provides the "non-residents" with constant information on trade-related developments through briefing notes and background information. To those that decide to set up a mission at Geneva, AITIC also provides logistical support and temporary office space during the process.

8. The Agency's current focus is on the main areas under negotiation in WTO: agriculture, industrial goods, services, rules and trade facilitation. Other activities are related to technical assistance on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, WTO accessions, regionalism, trade policy reviews and promotion of public-private sector partnerships. Other development-related areas where AITIC is currently working and offering assistance are implementation of the Aid for Trade and Enhanced Integrated Framework initiatives and economic partnership agreements.

7. Relations with other organizations

9. AITIC has observer status in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Conference on WTO of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

10. AITIC has signed a number of memorandums of understanding with its international partners, UNCTAD, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the International Law Institute to enable closer and more active collaboration.

11. AITIC has a close working relationship with other institutions, such as WTO, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the United Nations Secretariat, the International Trade Centre, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the ACP Group of States and the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie, as well as with academic institutions and the private sector.

8. Reasons for seeking observer status for AITIC

12. In keeping with United Nations Millennium Development Goal 8 and the aspirations of the WTO Doha Work Programme, AITIC assists the less-advantaged countries to have more effective trade policies and thus achieve poverty reduction through accelerated economic development. AITIC believes that the Aid for Trade and Enhanced Integrated Framework initiatives can be powerful tools for reaching these goals.

13. Trade and development-related issues are being discussed in forums other than WTO or UNCTAD. The international trade debate goes beyond the traditional and conventional economic or legal aspects. The effects of trade are being increasingly viewed in other contexts, such as climate change and environment, industrial development, social aspects (such as its relation to human rights and gender), health, labour, migration, energy, etc. At the same time, the analyses have become more specialized as regards trade's impact on different country groupings: least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small and vulnerable economies, among others.

14. Different United Nations organizations — World Health Organization, UNCTAD, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing States and Small Island Developing States, WIPO, International Labour Organization, World Meteorological Organization, World Customs Organization, Economic and Social Council, United Nations Environment Programme, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Development Programme and UNIDO — deal with these issues and country groupings as part of their core mandate, and each provides its own particular focus and perspective. Most of the organizations are branches of the United Nations. There is, therefore, a need for an organization engaged in providing trade-related technical assistance like AITIC to observe, study and analyse the relevant aspects of their activities, establish linkages and obtain comprehensive information. Being able to follow directly these debates and meetings, which the General Assembly views in unison, would be extremely valuable to AITIC. To keep track of them would assist it to better fulfil its own mandate and serve its members.

15. Being granted observer status in the United Nations General Assembly would boost the capacity of AITIC to cooperate with other United Nations agencies involved in poverty reduction and, hence, would allow AITIC to better fulfil its mandate.

9. Address

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P.O. Box 156
1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland
website: http://www.aitic.org

10. Head of the Agency

Esperanza Duran
Executive Director

Annex II

Draft resolution

Observer status for the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation in the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation,

1. *Decides* to invite the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.